South Africa, with its rich cultural diversity is widely known as a rainbow nation. This year marks the celebration of ten years of democracy. To commemorate this, I have compiled a multicultural list of books for older children and teens - J, JT & T categories, concentrating on contemporary novels. My selection includes a list of South African titles as well as international titles. However, before introducing this list, I want to provide a brief introduction to this genre.

Multicultural books can be distinguished from other books by one common feature: they seek to promote cultural awareness and appreciation in children. Books that provide a sensitive portrayal of another culture broaden readers’ minds and can thus be labelled multicultural. If the author is able to create believable characters with whom the reader can identify, then he/she will be able to relate to their situation and experiences, no matter how different from the reader’s own. In this way a climate of empathy and understanding is created, and a multicultural world-view is created.

The multicultural genre consists of two categories of books:

- those that are depicted within one specific culture, often a marginalised culture
- those in which an individual from one culture has to find a place in a society where another culture dominates.

The titles in the accompanying booklist mostly focus on the second category.

The benefits of this genre lie in the fact that it can affirm the existence of minority and oppressed groups. In South Africa, there is definitely a need for more contemporary books on the topic to create an environment of mutual understanding and tolerance amongst the various cultures. This is not an easy task.
Below is a selected list of South African multicultural titles as well as other titles.
This list can be used by librarians, educators and students in the field of library science.

South African multi-cultural titles
Ludman, Barbara. The day of the kugel. - Maskev Miller Longman, 1989. TLUJ
Naidoo, Beverley. Chain of fire. - Collins, 1989. TNAI
Naidoo, Beverley. No turning back. - Viking, 1995. JTNAI
Seed, Jenny. The hungry people. - Tafelberg, 1992. JTSEE
Slingsby, Peter. Flood Sunday. - Tafelberg, 1992. JS LI

General multi-cultural youth titles
Banks, Lynne Reid. One more river. - Penguin, 1988. T BAN
Blackman, Malorie. Trust me. - Livewire, 1992, T BLA
Gibbons, Alan. Whose side are you on? - Orion, 1994. JGIB
Gibbons, Alan. The edge. - Dolphin, 2002. TGIB
Hamilton, Virginia. Plain city. - Scholastic Signature, c1993. (on order)
Hicilyimaz, Gaye. Girl in red. - Dolphin, 2000. JHIC
Hicilyimaz, Gaye. Pictures from the fire. - Dolphin, 2003. JTHIC
Hill, Anthony. The burnt stick. - Viking, 1994. JHIL
Johnson, Angela. Toning the sweep. - Orchard Bks., 1995. JOH
Lisle, Janet Taylor. The art of keeping cool. - Aladdin Paperbacks, c2000. JTLIS
Murray, Millie. Cairo Hughes. - Livewire, 1996. TMUR
Rai, Bali. The crew. - Corgi, 2003. TRAI
Ryan, Pam Munoz. Esperanza rising. - Chicken House, 2003. TRYA
Smith, Ruksana. Rainbows of the gutter. - Muthuen, 1988. SMITH
Staples, Suzanne Fisher. Storm. - Red Fox, 1999. TSTA
Taylor, Mildred D. Let the circle be unbroken. - Penguin, 1988. T TAY
Ure, Jean. Just sixteen. - Orchard Bks., 1999. TURE
Woodson, Jacqueline. Last summer with Maizon. - Heinemann, 1991. JWOO
Woodson, Jacqueline. Maizon at Blue Hill. - Heinemann, 1993. JT WOO
Woodson, Jacqueline. From the notebooks of Melanin Sun. - Scholastic Signature, c1995. JT WOO

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